

# Study on the Changing Trend of Overseas Students in Mainland Universities of China in the Context of Diversification -Taking Jinan University as an example

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**Keywords:** Overseas students in mainland universities of china; Jinan university; Changing trend

**Abstract:** There is an obvious changing trend in the development of the education for overseas students in mainland universities of China under the background of the rise of global cross-border student flows. Taking Jinan University as an example, this paper presents the basic situation of the development of school education for overseas students in China from four dimensions of scale development, source structure, type and level, and major selection through empirical research and comparative analysis of the statistical data of overseas students in Jinan University from 2006 to 2015, points out the difficulties existing in the development of education for overseas students in mainland universities of China, and improves the attraction of education for overseas students in mainland universities of China so as to point out the direction for the healthy development of the education of overseas students in mainland universities.

## 1. Introduction

In the context of the rise of cross-border student flows, overseas education plays an increasingly important role in the internationalization of higher education. *National Medium and Long Term Education Reform and Development Outline (2010-2020)* puts forward “further expanding the scale of overseas students”, “optimizing the structure of overseas students in China”, “continuously improving the quality of education for overseas students in China”<sup>[1]</sup> and the education for overseas students in mainland universities of China is facing unprecedented development opportunities. At present, the proportion of overseas students in China has become an important indicator of the openness degree of universities. The development degree and level of education for overseas students in China is an important measure of international reputation and academic standards of a university.

## 2. Research object and data sources

This paper takes the overseas students of Jinan University in mainland China from 2006 to 2015 as the research object, and mainly adopts the quantitative analysis method and tries to start with the systematic statistical data analysis to present the education development of overseas students in China, and discusses the development trend, achievements and remaining deficiencies of the education for overseas students in mainland universities of China, and then puts forward some suggestions.

In this paper, the data of overseas students of Jinan University are collected from the information system platform and comprehensive statements designated by the Ministry of Education, including the *Academic Records Management Platform for Overseas Students in China*, the *National Management Information System for Overseas Students in China*, and the *Statistical Statement of Higher Education at the Primary Level*. Among them, the *Academic Records Management Platform for Overseas Students in China* and the *National Management Information System for Overseas Students in China* are data systems recognized by the Ministry of Education and must be used for academic records certification and management. *Statistical Statement of Higher Education at the Primary Level* is the only comprehensive statistical statement set by the Ministry of Education according to law, and it is the main basis for the Ministry of Education to verify the conditions for running a university.

### 3. Development of overseas students of Jinan University in mainland China

At present, from the school level, on the one hand, the mainland universities of China should actively cooperate with the national development strategy, and constantly expand the scale of overseas students to achieve a breakthrough in “quantity”; On the other hand, we should actively explore the road of connotative development, constantly improve the level of education, and realize the development of “quality”. Based on the analysis of relevant data, it is found that there is a diversified development trend in the change of overseas students of Jinan University from 2006 to 2015. The quality and level of education development of overseas students of Jinan University are analyzed in depth from the following aspect: development scale, structure category, selected major distribution and source distribution of overseas students in China.

#### 3.1 Scale development of overseas students in China: rapid growth in quantity and small overall scale

A rapid growth trend is shown in the development scale of education for overseas students of Jinan University from 2006 to 2015, with an average annual growth rate of 13.71%. Figure 1 shows that the annual growth rate from 2006 to 2014, except for 2009 and 2013, is more than 10%; The growth rate in 2007 and 2008 exceeds 25%, and that in 2014 is the highest, up to 50.42%. The number of language students has decreased significantly due to the slight adjustment of policy of Jinan University on language students in 2015, and the annual growth rate is negative for the first time. In terms of the overall quantity, the increase in number of overseas students of Jinan University from 2006 to 2015 is significant. The number of overseas students in China in 2006 is only 780. The total number of overseas students in China in 2015 is up to 2,442, 3.13 times of that in 2006. It can be seen that the expansion of the scale of overseas students of Jinan University benefits from the acceleration of economic globalization and the improvement of the comprehensive strength of the university, while the stable growth reflects the direct influence of external factors on the education market of overseas students of the university.

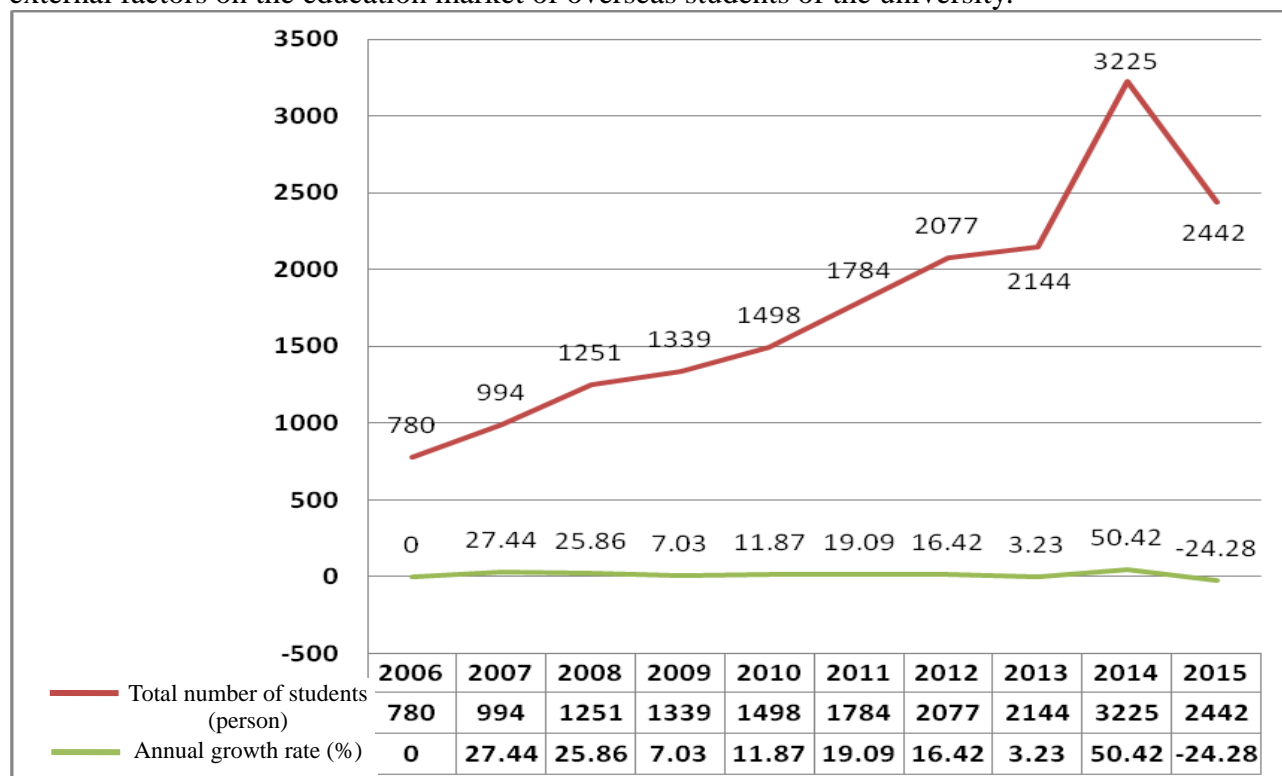


Figure 1 Changes in the Number of Overseas Students of Jinan University in China from 2006 to 2015

### 3.2 Changes in the source structure of overseas students in China

#### 3.2.1 The total number of source countries and regions is significantly increased and they are widely distributed

There are two important wind vanes in the source market of overseas students in China: the change in the distribution of the student source market and the change in the proportion of the student source market. In this regard, we can get the main source places of students and the potential market of students in the future in the education for overseas students in China through analysis. [2] With the growth of the total number of overseas students of Jinan University in China, the source countries and regions of overseas students are increasingly widely distributed from 2006 to 2015. In terms of quantity in Figure 2, as of 2015, overseas students of Jinan University are from 106 countries and regions all over the world, covering nearly half of the countries and regions in the world. The number of source countries and regions of overseas students from 2006 to 2015 increases by nearly 1.5 times, and the number of source countries and regions of overseas students in 2014 is the highest, up to 114. In terms of growth rate, the number of source countries and regions of students of Jinan University in China has reached a peak in 2014, with a growth rate of 23.91%. The growth rate in 2008, 2013 and 2015 decreases and shows a negative growth. Such data shows that with the further expansion of the range of source countries of overseas students recruited by Jinan University, the international influence of the university is further increased, and the recognition of international education is continuously improved.

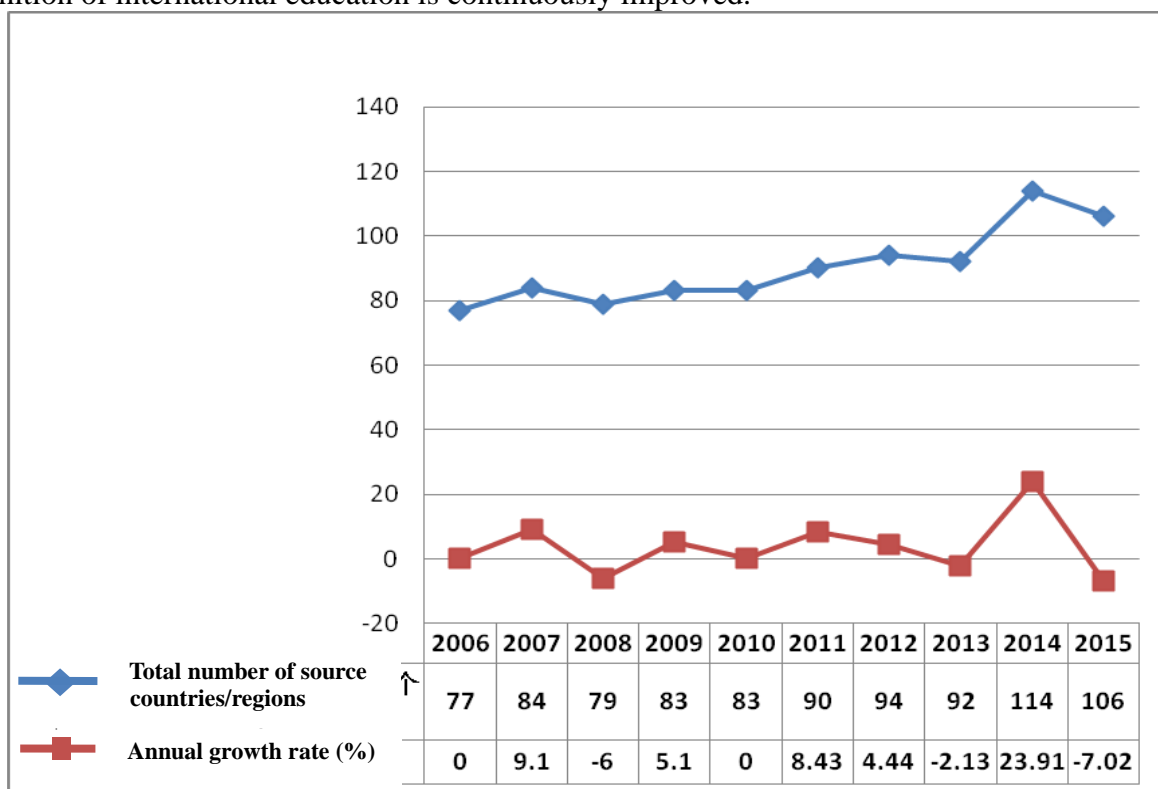


Figure 2 Changes in the Number of Source Countries of Overseas Students of Jinan University in China from 2006 to 2015

#### 3.2.2 In terms of intercontinental sources: they are mainly in Asia, and there is a rapid growth in those in Africa

With the change of scale of education for overseas students of universities in China, the source structure of overseas students in China has also changed significantly. At present, judging from the intercontinental distribution of overseas students of Jinan University in China, the distribution of intercontinental countries is not balanced, and Asian students are still the main force of overseas students studying in China. In addition to Oceania, the number of source countries and regions of overseas students in China from 2006 to 2015 increases. According to the data in Table 1, Asia is

the county with the largest number of source countries and regions of overseas students in China, followed by Africa, America, Europe and Oceania. Over the past decade, the number of source countries and regions has increased by 10 in Asia, 14 in Africa, 2 in America, 4 in Europe, and it is kept to be 4 in Oceania without increase. In terms of the proportion of the number of source countries and regions from all continents in the total number of source countries in that year, it increases slightly from 32.47% to 33.02% in Asia, increases from 24.68% to 31.13% in Africa, decreases from 22.08% to 17.92% in America, decreases slightly from 15.58% to 15.09% in Europe. Although the proportion of source of overseas students from all continents in China has changed, it is still dominated by Asia of which the proportion has decreased in recent years; The proportion of the number of source countries and regions in Africa increases significantly, and the proportion of students has steadily increased. The source of students in Europe and America has not changed much. The size of source of students in Oceania is small and stagnant.

Table 1 Changes in The Intercontinental Source of Overseas Students of Jinan University in China from 2006 to 2015

Category Year	Asia		Africa		America		Europe		Oceania	
	Total (nos.)	Proportion (%)	Total (nos.)	Proportion (%)	Total (nos.)	Proportion (%)	Total (nos.)	Proportion (%)	Total (nos.)	Proportion (%)
2006	25	32.47	19	24.68	17	22.08	12	15.58	4	5.19
2007	25	29.76	20	23.81	19	22.62	16	19.05	4	4.76
2008	24	30.40	20	25.32	18	22.78	13	16.46	4	5.06
2009	26	31.33	19	22.89	18	21.69	16	19.28	4	4.82
2010	24	28.92	22	26.51	18	21.69	15	18.07	4	4.82
2011	30	33.33	22	24.44	18	20.00	16	17.78	4	4.44
2012	36	38.30	25	26.60	18	19.15	13	13.83	3	3.19
2013	33	35.87	25	27.17	17	18.48	13	14.13	4	4.35
2014	38	33.33	34	29.82	19	16.67	19	16.67	4	3.51
2015	35	33.02	33	31.13	19	17.92	16	15.09	4	3.77

### 3.2.3 In terms of country source: Asian countries is predominant, and Indonesia has been at the top of the list for a long term

From the perspective of country sources of students of Jinan University in China, the top eight countries are basically Asian countries. The number of overseas students from these countries in China is growing rapidly, making it the concentration area of the top eight countries with the largest number of overseas students. According to the data in Table 2, Indonesia has been the source country with the largest number of overseas students of Jinan University in China for five consecutive years, and the number of overseas students from Indonesia has been significantly ahead of other countries. Thailand has ranked second in the past five years, rising from 200 in 2011 to 410 in 2015, with an increase of more than twice. It can be seen that Indonesia and Thailand are the two main countries, and the sum of the two countries has always accounted for more than 60% of the total number of overseas students in China. The expansion of overseas students of Jinan University in China is highly dependent on Indonesia and Thailand, which is prone to fluctuations in the total number of students. Meanwhile, since a large number of overseas students from India chose clinical medicine major of Jinan University in recent years, India surpassed South Korea as the third source country of overseas students in 2015. In addition, the number of overseas students from Malaysia, Myanmar and the Philippines is on the decline, of which the number of overseas students from Malaysia has declined by nearly 50%, from 91 in 2011 to 48 in 2015. The ranking of other Asian countries has changed, but the quantity has not changed much. It is worth noting that Russia is the only European country among the top eight countries, with a significant increase in the number of overseas students, ranking fifth with 117 in 2014.

Table 2 the Top Eight Countries with the Largest Number of Overseas Students of Jinan University in China and the Number of Overseas Students from 2011 to 2015 (Unit: Person)

Sorting Year		First	Second	Third	Fourth	Fifth	Sixth	Seventh	Eighth	
2011	Country	Indonesia	Thailand	South Korea	Malaysia	Myanmar	Russia	Vietnam	Philippines	
	Number of students (person)	528	200	108	91	79	68	67	55	
2012	Country	Indonesia	Thailand	South Korea	Malaysia	Myanmar	Vietnam	India	Russia	
	Number of students (person)	627	198	97	91	82	71	68	60	
2013	Country	Indonesia	Thailand	South Korea	Myanmar	Malaysia	Vietnam	Philippines	India	Russia
	Number of students (person)	633	269	90	90	79	58	55	54	54
2014	Country	Indonesia	Thailand	South Korea	India	Russia	Myanmar	Philippines	Malaysia	
	Number of students (person)	847	407	169	131	117	87	81	80	
2015	Country	Indonesia	Thailand	India	South Korea	Philippines	Myanmar	Laos	Malaysia	
	Number of students (person)	610	410	188	103	67	65	56	48	

### 3.3 Changes in type and level structure of overseas students in China

#### 3.3.1 The proportion of overseas students with academic qualifications in China has increased, while the proportion of high-level overseas students is relatively small

The proportion of the number of students with academic qualifications, especially postgraduates among overseas students, represents the learning level of overseas students. [3] Based on the data from 2006 to 2015, it is analyzed that there are obvious changes in the type and level structure of overseas students of Jinan University in China, and the proportion of overseas students with academic qualifications is gradually increasing, but the proportion of overseas students with high-level master's degree and doctor's degree is still low. Generally speaking, the proportion of overseas students with academic qualifications has increased, while the proportion of high-level students is relatively small. The composition of overseas students in China includes overseas students with academic qualifications and overseas students without academic qualifications, among which the overseas students with academic qualifications are divided into undergraduate and postgraduate levels (including master students and doctoral students); overseas students without academic qualifications are mainly language students, preparatory students and short-term trainees. From the perspective of the development of overseas education in China, the overseas students with academic qualifications are more important for the development of internationalization of higher education in China.

Figure 3 shows that the proportion of overseas students with academic qualifications of Jinan University in China from 2006 to 2015 is on the rise. overseas students with academic qualifications in 2006 accounts for only 33.97%. The growth rate in 2009 has reached 72.52%, 2.13 times higher than that in 2006. It began to decline in 2010, to 47.16% in 2014 and rise again to 68.80% in 2015. overseas students with academic qualifications in China accounts for the largest proportion of overseas students, rising from 72.45% in 2006 to 90.95% in 2015. It is worth noting that the proportion of postgraduate students is relatively small and on the decline, in which the

proportion of master students decreases from 20.38% to 8.35%, and that of doctoral students decreases from 7.17% to 2.14%.

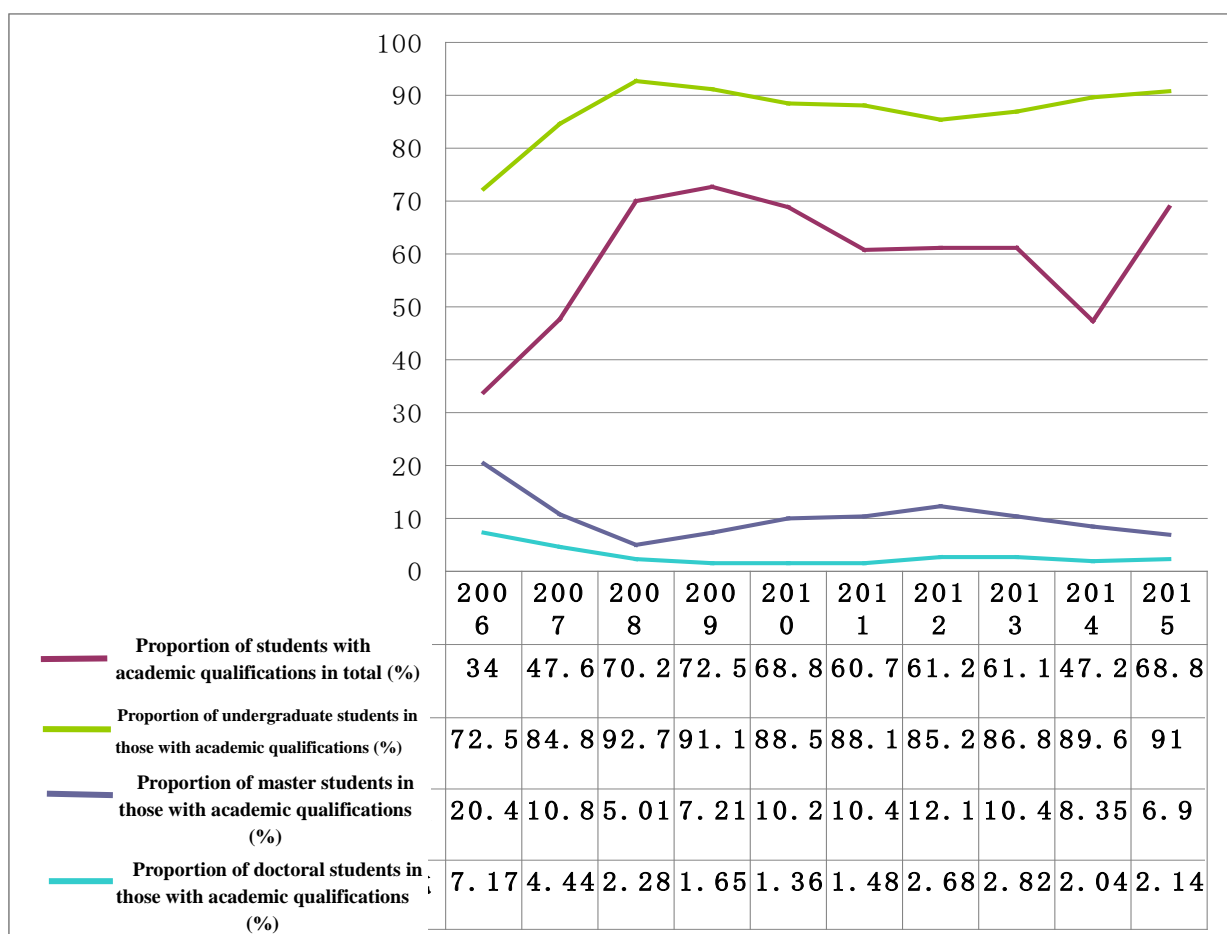


Figure 3 Proportion of Overseas Students with Academic Qualifications of Jinan University in China in 2006 - 2015 (Unit:%)

### 3.3.2 The number of language students among overseas students without academic qualifications in china has changed significantly, while the number of preparatory students is relatively small

From 2006 to 2015, overseas students without academic qualifications of Jinan University in China are mainly language students, and a small number of preparatory students began to appear in 2011. Although the overall proportion of overseas students without academic qualifications in China has declined, the number of them is growing every year. The data in Figure 4 shows that there are 515 language students among the overseas students of the university in China in 2006. The number of language students slightly declines in 2008 and 2009, and began to have a slow growth in 2010. The number of language students exceeded 1,000 in 2014 for the first time, reaching 1679, 3.26 times of that in 2006. As language students are students who come to China for short-term Chinese training. As a communication tool, Chinese is relatively limited in the demand, which makes the number of language students among overseas students “lack of stamina” after increasing to a certain extent. In 2015, the quantity decreased significantly due to the adjustment of policy of Jinan University on language students, falling back to 757. The number of preparatory students is very small among overseas students without academic qualifications, and on the decline. The average number from 2011 to 2015 is only 20, and it is only 5 in 2015. The data in 2006 - 2015 also show that the number of non-academic education overseas students majored in Chinese Language in China has not increased significantly. It can be concluded that the growth of the number of overseas students without academic qualifications in China depends on the expansion of the number of overseas students taking short-term Chinese training to a large extent.

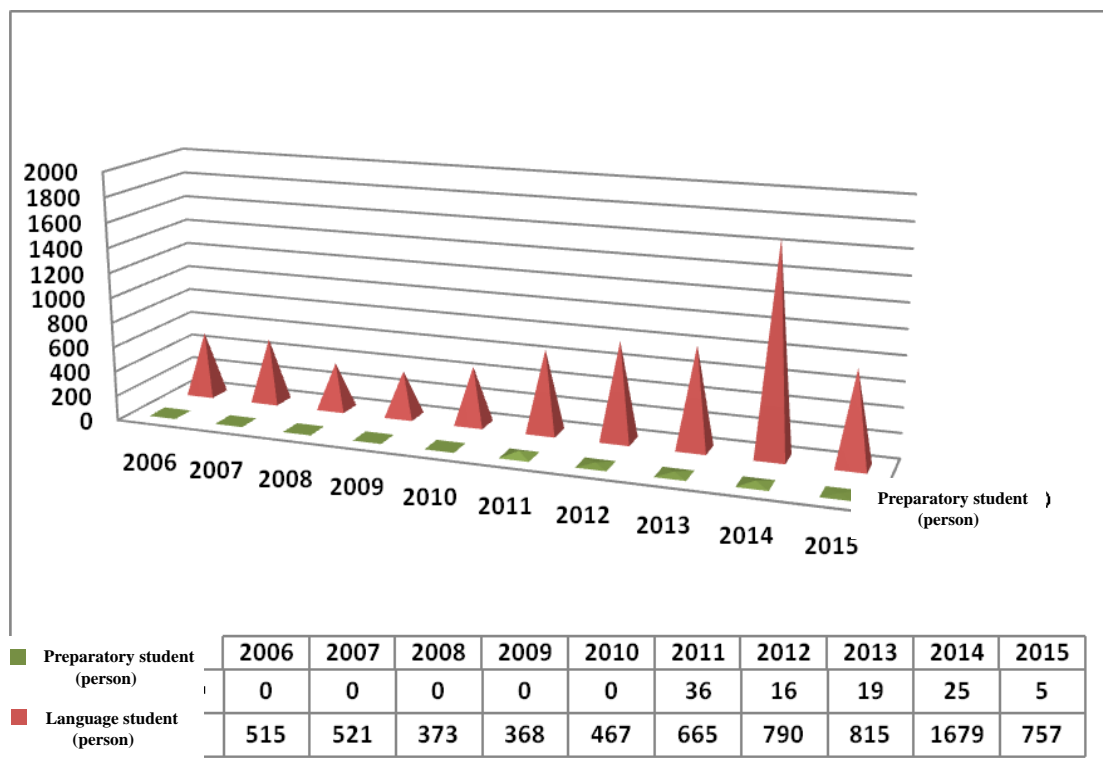


Figure 4 Proportion of Overseas Students without Academic Qualifications of Jinan University in China in 2006 - 2015 (Unit: Person)

Changes in the Discipline Structure of Overseas Students in China: The Selected Majors are Widely Distributed, Mainly in Humanities

Overseas students of Jinan University in China select the majors of Chinese Language, Medicine, Economy, Management, Literature, Education, etc.. Chinese Education Major, Clinical Medicine Major and Chinese Language Major have always been the dominant majors for overseas education of Jinan University, with obvious overall advantages. These disciplines are exactly the interest points of overseas students of the university in China. In terms of overseas students with bachelor's degree, Table 3 shows that the majority of overseas students of Jinan University choose Chinese Education Major, followed by Clinical Medicine Major and Chinese Language Major. The number of overseas students choosing Chinese Education Major from 2006 to 2015 increases by more than five times, from 55 in 2006 to 288 in 2015, with obvious advantages. The number of overseas students choosing Clinical Medicine Major and Chinese Language Major increases 1.53 times and 1.56 times respectively. The number of overseas students choosing economy and management categories is small, and on the decline. The number of overseas students majored in economy decreases from 62 in 2006 to 29 in 2015, while the number of overseas students majored in management decreases from 32 in 2006 to 14 in 2015. The number of overseas students majored in engineering, law, history and science has been relatively small. In terms of overseas students with postgraduate qualifications, Table 4 shows that the number of overseas students of Jinan University with postgraduate qualifications before 2009 is very small, with literature and clinical medicine as the main majors, and the number of overseas students choosing economics, management, law and education majors is very few. Since 2009, the number of postgraduate students majored in Chinese Education has been leading those of other majors, but the growth in quantity is slow and the change is not big. It is followed by management and literature majors, with not many overseas students. Few people choose economics, clinical medicine, history, engineering and science.

Table 3 Comparison of the Number of Overseas Students (Undergraduates) with Academic Qualifications of Jinan University in 2006 - 2015 (Unit: Person)

Major Ranking Year	Liberal arts							Clinical Medicine	Engineering	Sciences
	Chinese Language Education	Chinese Language	Literature	Law	History	Economy	Administration			
2006	55	41	20	2	0	62	32	55	9	1
2007	62	34	12	2	1	58	15	26	5	1
2008	45	51	13	0	0	71	23	22	13	0
2009	54	49	13	0	0	82	17	29	2	0
2010	66	37	4	1	0	57	5	21	11	0
2011	97	74	4	1	0	72	13	70	12	0
2012	111	107	9	0	1	83	3	8	11	0
2013	147	85	7	0	0	72	12	94	6	0
2014	145	116	6	6	0	31	7	75	10	1
2015	288	64	13	2	0	29	14	84	2	2

Table 4 Comparison of The Number of Overseas Students (Postgraduates) with Academic Qualifications of Jinan University in 2006 - 2015 (Unit: Person)

Major Year	Chinese Language Education	Administration	Literature	Medicine	Economy	Law	Engineering	History	Sciences
2006	1	2	10	6	0	1	0	0	0
2007	0	0	16	2	1	1	0	0	0
2008	0	0	3	5	0	1	1	0	0
2009	30	0	16	3	0	1	1	0	0
2010	43	0	3	3	1	2	0	0	0
2011	25	9	0	3	1	0	0	0	0
2012	29	8	2	0	2	1	0	0	0
2013	23	20	4	1	0	1	0	0	0
2014	19	7	11	2	1	3	1	0	0
2015	34	20	11	3	4	0	1	1	1

#### 4. Thoughts on improving the educational attraction of overseas students in mainland universities of China

From 2006 to 2015, Jinan University has made good achievements in both quantity and quality in the development of education for overseas students in China, which has significantly improved in terms of development scale, source structure, type and level, discipline and specialty, etc.. For example, the total number of overseas students in China has increased by more than three times, the number of countries and regions where overseas students come from has increased by 1.5 times, the proportion of overseas students with academic qualifications has increased by more than two times, and the selected majors of overseas students in China is more diverse. However, based on the comparative analysis of data from Jinan University, it is not difficult to find that there are still outstanding problems in the attraction of education for overseas students in mainland universities of China, which requires mainland universities to fully recognize the factors affecting the changes in the education structure of overseas students in China, and actively take effective measures to make the education of overseas students in China more reasonable and promote their healthy and sustainable development.

##### 4.1 Increase the proportion of foreign teachers and create competitive international courses

Improve the attraction of overseas education in China, the key is to improve the quality of education and the level of internationalization of universities, so as to improve the influence of universities. The international faculty composition is an important basis and guarantee for better setting international courses, more participating in international education and scientific research cooperation, and attracting more overseas students to China. A higher proportion of international



faculty is one of the commonalities of world-famous universities. According to the data in the *Table of Full-time Teachers and External Teachers' Academic Qualifications (Positions) in Statistical Statement of Higher Education at the Primary Level of Jinan University 2015*,<sup>[4]</sup> there are 72 foreign teachers in Jinan University in 2015, accounting for 3.35% of the total number of teachers in that year. It can be seen that the internationalization level of Jinan University's teaching staff still needs to be improved. Secondly, more competitive international courses are needed to improve the attraction of overseas education in mainland universities of China, and English teaching is an important embodiment of education internationalization. For example, the International School of Jinan University has a series of courses completely taught in English, covering literature, economics, finance, medicine, food engineering and computers, etc.. Therefore, in order to improve the international attraction of courses, mainland universities of China should further expand the types of courses for science and engineering majors and enrich the selection of courses in view of the fact that the major of overseas study in China mainly focuses on traditional majors such as Chinese Language, Humanities and Social Sciences, Traditional Chinese Medicine, and the current situation that the number of overseas students for science and engineering majors is relatively small.

#### **4.2 Improve the management level and education quality of overseas students in China**

The management of overseas students is an important way to do a good job in the education of overseas students. It is also an important means to promote the reform and development of education for overseas students, to achieve the objectives of education for overseas students, and to improve the quality of education for overseas students. In terms of the management of overseas students coming to China, mainland universities should continue to strengthen the construction of the management system of overseas students in combination with the actual situation of the University, and on the basis of maintaining the stability and continuity of the system, continue to supplement and improve, and gradually realize the standardization of daily work, the perfection of rules and regulations, and the scientific management system. Under the background of diversified era, mainland universities of China need to constantly improve the network construction, improve the information management level of overseas students in China, improve and upgrade the construction of the management system of overseas students of universities in China, and gradually realize the real-time update and sharing of all aspects of information resources of overseas students. In addition, as the allocation of the management team of overseas students will directly affect the management level and service quality of overseas students of universities, mainland universities of China should also strengthen the construction of the management team of overseas students in China, comprehensively improve the ideological and political quality, policy theory level, comprehensive knowledge level and business practice skills of the management staff of overseas students at all levels.

#### **4.3 Broaden the channel for source of scholarships and improve the policy of educational support for overseas students in China**

With the rapid development of the education of overseas students, more and more universities regard the education for overseas students as the main source of income for universities. The establishment of scholarship system for overseas students has become a main way to expand the scale of the education for their overseas students. Therefore, mainland universities of China can apply to increase the number of central and provincial government scholarships, improve the standards of scholarships, and continue to expand the international student source space and optimize the discipline and major structure of overseas students according to the proportion of overseas students from different countries and different majors in the scholarship program for overseas students at the same time. In addition, in view of the relatively limited government investment in scholarships for overseas students in China, mainland universities of China can try to establish a more flexible and diverse enterprise scholarship system for overseas students in China, cooperate with local enterprises and social organizations to expand the source channel of educational funds for overseas students in the universities, and add various types of scholarships and bursaries, so as to attract outstanding students or high level talents urgently needed by

enterprises to study in China and offer them the opportunity to enter relevant enterprises to work after graduation.

## **5. Conclusions**

All in all, the education of overseas students in mainland universities of China has developed rapidly, with the characteristics of obvious growth in student scale, increasingly wide distribution of sources, gradual optimization of level structure, and gradual diversification of discipline selection. There are still some shortcomings in the development of education for overseas students in mainland universities of China in the meantime, such as the lower level structure of students and the lack of fund for scholarships. With the rapid development of economic globalization and the internationalization of higher education, mainland universities of China should continuously improve the quality of management and training of overseas students in China on the basis of expanding the scale of overseas students in China, give full play to the comparative advantages of disciplines and majors, increase the proportion of foreign teachers and foreign language courses, improve the funding policies of education for overseas students, and attract more foreign students from high-level and developed countries to study in the universities, so as to further improve the quality and international level of higher education of universities.

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